DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 426 679 HE 031 837

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TITLE Evaluation of a Weekend Programming Calendar for Freshmen at Clarion University of Pennsylvania.
PUB DATE 1998-12-00
NOTE 51p.; Ed.D. Practicum, Nova Southeastern University.
PUB TYPE Dissertations/Theses - Practicum Papers (043) -- Reports - Evaluative (142)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *College Freshmen; *Extracurricular Activities; Higher Education; Program Evaluation; Recreational Activities; School Recreational Programs; Social Integration; Student Attitudes; *Student Experience; Student Personnel Services; Student Surveys
IDENTIFIERS *Clarion University of Pennsylvania

ABSTRACT

This practicum report describes a project which evaluated the extent to which the weekend programming calendar for first-year students at Clarion University (Pennsylvania) was meeting program goals and integrating freshmen into the social setting of the campus. A questionnaire was used to survey 200 freshmen. Survey results indicated that students favored some weekend events more than others, that most events were well attended, that most students were satisfied with many events, that students were informed of events by campus posters and friends, and that students wanted to travel from Clarion University to additional events. Specific recommendations were developed, including: (1) continuation of events that encourage interaction with faculty and peers; (2) sponsoring of events that take students to popular spots near Clarion for an entire day; (3) encouragement of students to participate in recreational sports and artistic/musical activities; and (4) delivery of low-cost events more than once a semester. Individual sections of the paper provide an introduction and review of the literature, explain methodology and procedures, report results, and discuss conclusions, implications, and recommendations. Appendices include a list of outcomes of the original programming calendar, lists of committee members, and guidelines for freshman programming assessment. (Contains 14 references.) (DB)

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EVALUATION OF A WEEKEND PROGRAMMING CALENDAR FOR FRESHMEN AT CLARION UNIVERSITY

Emergence of Higher Education

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Clarion University of Pennsylvania

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Western Pennsylvania Cluster

A practicum report presented to Programs for Higher Education

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

degree of Doctor of Education

LAE 631 837

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December, 1998

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Abstract of a practicum report presented to Nova Southeastern University

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EVALUATION OF A WEEKEND PROGRAMMING CALENDAR FOR FRESHMEN AT CLARION UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

by

William A. Adams

December, 1998

In the 1998 fall semester, the Special Weekend Programming Committee (a sub-committee on retention) implemented a Weekend Programming Calendar of events, which has not been evaluated for effectiveness. The Calendar is aimed at integrating freshmen into the social setting of the campus. The purpose of the study was to determine the extent to which the Weekend Programming Calendar for first-year students was meeting the established program goals. There was one research question for this study. The research question was, "To what extent is the Weekend Programming Calendar meeting the program objectives?"

An evaluation problem-solving methodology was utilized in this study. A literature review was conducted, and the criteria for the evaluation were established. A survey questionnaire, which was developed as a previous practicum, was utilized to collect the data. The data was collected by surveying 200 freshmen, analyzed by calculating mean scores, and recommendations were prepared based on the findings of the study.

The survey results indicated that students favored some weekend events more than other events. The conclusions were that most events were well attended, and that most students who responded to the survey were satisfied with many of the events. The results indicated that most students were informed of the events by campus posters and friends. Results also showed students would like to travel from Clarion University to specific events.

Specific recommendations for action were made. It was recommended that the committee continue to offer events that encourage interaction with faculty and peers and sponsor events that will take students to popular spots near Clarion for the entire day. It was also recommended to encourage students to challenge their own abilities through recreational sports and artistic and musical activities, and deliver low-cost events more than once a semester. Recommendations were also made for dissemination of this information to the individuals and groups sponsoring the events. Recommendations for further research were made regarding the role of the family in freshmen seminars.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Clarion University is making a commitment to increase retention among freshmen students over the next five years. Retention was one of the major areas of focus in an outline from the President. The Special Weekend Programming Committee is a sub-committee on retention that is targeting events to get more freshmen interacting with other students, faculty, and peers during weekends throughout the fall semester. This study resulted in the evaluation of a Weekend Programming Calendar of events aimed specifically at freshmen to offer them more options on weekends.

Background and Significance

Clarion University of Pennsylvania is a rural, state-owned institution that is a member of the State System of Higher Education in Pennsylvania. It is one of fourteen schools in the State System and has an enrollment of nearly 6000 students. The degree programs, costs, campus environment, demographic population, and faculty among the fourteen schools are quite similar. However, it is the philosophy of the System that each university retain some individuality.

Because of the close proximity of at least three other state universities, enrollment and retention are important issues with respect to the financial health of the institution. Clarion is therefore coordinating efforts to increase and retain its student population. An Enrollment Management Committee at Clarion oversees programs that help guide freshmen through the first year in hopes of retaining them. The Special Programming Committee is part of the overall enrollment management activity and retention program. Its aim is to integrate freshmen early with other students, faculty, and peers so that the new students will build a commitment to the institution. This, then should have a positive impact on student retention.

An evaluation of the Weekend Programming Calendar is very important as the university looks into ways of retaining freshmen students. The results of the evaluation can provide information regarding the effectiveness of weekend activities and whether or not they contribute positively to retention, grade point average, and student-satisfaction.

Nature of the Problem

The purpose of the Weekend Programming Calendar was to offer events for first-year students that involve their families, faculty members, administrators, peers from the university, and other students. The events and activities were aimed at integrating students the first six weekends of the fall semester, an extension of the summer orientation.

There were two overall objectives of the Weekend Programming Calendar. The objectives were to encourage freshmen to participate in weekend activities on campus and to increase the level of satisfaction freshmen have in the weekend activities within the social setting of the institution.

A member of the Special Weekend Committee, a university sub-committee on retention, recommended that the Weekend Programming Calendar be evaluated based on its objectives after the initial six-week implementation (personal communication, May, 1998). The problem was a need for evidence that the Weekend Programming Calendar was effective in meeting its established objectives.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to determine the extent to which the Weekend Programming Calendar for first-year students was meeting the established program goals. The results of the evaluation would help make decisions regarding future implementation of weekend programs for freshmen.

Relationship to Seminar

This practicum was directly related to the Emergence of Higher Education seminar. The course outline for the Emergence of Higher Education seminar states that students should be able to demonstrate how the diversity found in American higher education implements the philosophy of democracy. Students should also be prepared to react to solving the current problems of higher education in a positive and ethical manner. This practicum was specifically related to evaluating a program that encouraged the interaction of diverse freshmen students, promoted a sense of community, and retained them as they made the transition into college life. Lucas (1994) states that loss of community figured as a recurrent theme in several late twentieth-century analyses of American higher education (p. 286). The evaluation of the Weekend Programming Calendar allowed organizers to make changes if necessary to meet the needs of incoming freshmen as society continues to change.

Research Questions

There was one research question for this study. The research question was, "To what extent is the Weekend Programming Calendar meeting the program objectives?"

Definition of Terms

The following terms need defined for this study.

Events. Events are weekend social activities targeted at freshmen to get them more involved in the social setting of the university.

Incoming freshmen. Students who are beginning their first year of study at Clarion University and have just graduated from high school and attended the summer orientation are incoming freshmen.

Weekend Programming Calendar. The weekend programming calendar is a fall semester schedule of weekend activities aimed at integrating freshmen with their families, fellow students, faculty, and other peers at the university.

Freshmen Seminars. Freshmen seminars are courses for first-year students to help them in the transition into a new academic and social setting of the college.

Success Courses. Success courses aim to ease the transition to the college environment and increase the chances that students will be more successful.

Weight Total. The weight total is the sum of Likert scale scores for each event.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A review of literature related to the evaluation of freshmen programs that increase interaction, retention, and the satisfaction of first-year students and methods of analyzing a Likert scale was conducted in order to establish a conceptual base for the evaluation project, to explore the theoretical and conceptual thinking of experts in the field, to identify previous research findings, and to provide a basis for discussion in Chapter 5. Sources included several journal articles and ERIC documents discussing student interaction, social interaction, retention, evaluation procedures, and similar freshmen programs at numerous institutions. These documents were identified by a computer search using the following descriptors: (a) freshmen programs; (b) freshmen retention; (c) evaluation of freshmen programs; (d) institutional evaluation; (e) college adjustment; and (f) college freshmen. The review of pertinent literature is organized into three subtopics: (a) similar freshmen programs; (b) institutional evaluation of freshmen programs; and (c) analysis of a Likert scale.

Similar Freshmen Programs

Freshmen seminars are success courses for entering students that aim to ease the student's transition to the college environment and increase the chances that students will be more successful. Barefoot (1993) explored evaluation efforts from thirty-four colleges and universities that offered freshmen seminar/student success courses and how outcomes were measured (p. 2).

The freshmen seminar course at Frostburg State University is a program that has similar attributes to the Weekend Programming Calendar for freshmen at Clarion University. Although the freshmen seminar course at Frostburg is mandatory for all first-year students and for transfer students with fewer than 25 credits, it stresses important concepts like the Weekend

Programming Calendar. Course topics in the Frostburg Program include knowledge about campus activities, dealing with freedom, self-appraisal of abilities, selecting a major, cultural diversity, and developing commitments (Willey, 1993, p. 49). Frostburg State University, with enrollment at approximately 5000, has nearly the same student population as Clarion University of Pennsylvania.

Larger universities implement programs for first-year students, too. The freshmen seminar offered at UNC-Charlotte is designed to integrate students with the academic and social environment at the university (Maistro, 1993, p. 73). In 1987, researchers at UNC-Charlotte, with a student population of over 15000, investigated the social and academic integration of freshmen seminar participants and non-participants. In general, it was hypothesized that students who had taken the freshmen seminar would show higher levels of institutional commitment, as measured by academic and social integration, than students who did not enroll in the freshmen seminar. The UNC-Charlotte freshmen seminar made important connections with academic and social support by faculty and peer interactions.

The University of Prince Edward Island, with approximately 2600 full-time students, is a smaller institution than Clarion University of Pennsylvania but still recognizes the importance of freshmen programs to ease the transition into the college setting. University 100 is a six semester hour (two-semester) course designed to give first-year students an introduction to the university and to university studies (Robb, 1993, p. 41). Specific goals of the course are to develop effective academic skills, to assist in the development of self-knowledge, and to promote interaction, programs, and services of the university.

Ramapo college of New Jersey made use of an evaluation to reach a decision regarding its freshmen seminar. Since 1986, Ramapo has offered a three-semester hour, letter-graded

seminar. The seminar included units on higher education in America, writing, research, computer skills, interpersonal skills, diversity-interaction, volunteerism, stress management, and career planning. In 1986, approximately half of the entering freshmen enrolled in College Seminar. The seminar encouraged students to be more involved in campus activities, use campus services, and become more proactive. After 1987, College Seminar became a required course for all first-year students.

The College of Holy Cross in central Massachusetts instituted a revised freshmen program in the beginning of the fall 1992 semester. The program was adopted to remedy the discontinuity between students' academic and social life (Singleton, Garvey, & Phillips, 1993, p. 24). Since its inception, the First-Year Program has been one of the most thoroughly evaluated innovations in the history of the college.

Institutional Evaluation of Freshmen Programs

A survey instrument was implemented to evaluate the effectiveness of the Freshmen Seminar Course at Frostburg State University. One part of the course evaluation included a questionnaire that attempted to determine the relationship between measures of academic and social integration and retention. Students were surveyed to determine their level of academic and social integration with campus life. Survey results indicated the cohort with higher measures of academic and social integration expressed greater commitment to completing a college degree and greater commitment to Frostburg State University than those cohorts with less interaction (Willey, 1993, p. 50).

The use of a survey has been effective at other institutions to evaluate freshmen programs. Because of the increased academic support and faculty and peer interactions provided by a freshmen seminar at UNC-Charlotte, it was hypothesized that students who had taken the

course would show higher levels of institutional commitment, as measured by academic and social integration, than students who had not enrolled in the freshmen seminar. By using an adjective rating scale to describe academic and social environments, freshmen seminar participants rated their academic and their social surroundings. Freshmen seminar participants described their academic and social environments as more positive, conducive, enriching, and comfortable than non-participants (Maistro, 1993, p. 73).

In addition, data was collected on student grade point averages, expectations of college life, numbers of informal interactions with faculty members, and extra-curricular involvement. Study findings indicated that freshmen seminar participants had significantly higher grade point averages and more informal social interactions with faculty than non-participants (Maistro, 1993, p. 74).

A survey to evaluate a freshmen program can provide valuable information and results. In April 1991, a survey instrument at the University of Prince Edward Island was mailed to the 206 students who had completed a freshmen course, University 100, since the course was first offered in 1986. Thirty-five percent of the students responded to the survey. Ninety-three percent of those responding said that they would recommend the course to other students. The response of the University 100 graduates was overwhelmingly positive (Robb, 1993, p. 42).

Since 1987, the three-semester hour, letter-graded freshmen seminar at Ramapo College of New Jersey has been required of all entering college students. Seminar evaluators questioned the effect of the seminar on persistence rates. Results of a survey distributed to freshmen since 1986 may have explained the difference in persistence rates. Students who participated in the College Seminar were more involved in all aspects of campus life, had a greater comfort level,

more out-of-class interaction with faculty, and were more familiar with college support services (Starke, 1993, p. 40).

A survey of participants can not only yield feedback regarding the program but it can support program facilitators in the revision process. Since its inception, the First-Year Program for freshmen at The College of Holy Cross has been one of the most thoroughly evaluated innovations in the history of the college. Students have completed lengthy questionnaires at the end of their first year and a sample of students has been interviewed during their first year. Other numerous sources of institutional data, such as transcripts, housing surveys, and records of student involvement in campus life, have been analyzed (Singleton, Garvey, & Phillips, 1993, p. 24). The extensive evaluation led to the addition of more student-faculty interaction, improvement of housing conditions, and more cultural events that match the background of first-year students.

A thorough evaluation of a program can lead to changes that will foster the success of the program. According to Eschbach and Morgan (1994), a questionnaire was found useful in evaluating a Freshmen Goal Setting Program that fostered student development, interaction, and integration through individual meetings and group activities (p. 385). The program directors designed a mid-year evaluation utilizing "focus group" discussions to determine whether changes were needed for the spring semester. The evaluation contributed to program changes such as more interaction between Resident Assistants and students, and additional activities in small groups.

Guidelines were developed by John Gardner and a staff member of the National Center for the Study of the Freshmen Year Experience. This booklet presents questions that can be used by a college or university task force looking at the freshmen year experience and can be utilized

to aid the process of campus self-study or assessment (Gardner, 1990, p. 3) The questions are arranged under three major headings: (a) campus policies, process, and climate; (b) academics; and (c) student life and services.

A simple evaluation of an existing program can be performed by answering questions linked to the program objectives. Under the subheading, Development of Common Culture and Community, the booklet suggests answering the question, "Do campus rituals, ceremonies, special functions or receptions celebrate the arrival of freshmen?" Under the same subheading is the question, "Are there common activities throughout the freshmen year that build a strong sense of campus community and impact campus values?" A complete listing of questions pertinent to this evaluation study are listed in Appendix D (p. 48) of this report.

Analysis of a Likert Scale

A Likert scale was used to evaluate the level of satisfaction students had with events in the Weekend Programming Calendar. Since the questionnaire was developed as a part of another practicum and used to evaluate the calendar, methods of data analysis regarding a Likert scale were explored.

Gathering and processing Likert-type responses are efficient. Respondents know how to complete Likert items because nearly everyone has, at one time or another, been asked to rate something using a Likert scale. Rating scales have the advantage of providing data that uses values rather than merely categories (Edwards, Thomas, Rosenfeld, & Booth-Kewley, 1997, p. 43). This will provide much greater flexibility during the analysis phase.

A Likert scale is relatively easy to analyze. The analysis becomes much easier if a mid-point has been incorporated into the scaling system. The midpoint is the only way to allow respondents who truly hold a neutral attitude to express accurately how they feel or think

(Edwards, Thomas, Rosenfeld, & Booth-Kewley, 1997, p. 44). When tabulating results and computing the averages for the survey items or dimensions, some of the means will naturally have values that fall at the midpoint of the scale. When analyzing the results, it becomes easy to discuss results falling at the midpoint of the scale when a midpoint has been included in the survey scale.

Measuring the results of a Likert scale, also known as a summated scale, can be done rather quickly. The sum of the respondents' answers are tabulated for each item or statement listed in the survey. Next, the respondents' average or median ratings are computed for each statement, giving an indication of how the respondent feels about the item or statement according to the anchor words at each end of the rating scale. A summated scale aligns people according to how their responses to controversial, satisfaction, or debatable statements add up (Fink & Kosecoff, 1985, p).

There are many aspects of analyzing the data obtained from a Likert rating scale. Two common measurement techniques are central tendency and variability. These measures make it possible to discuss and present data retrieved from a Likert scale.

Measures of central tendency are descriptive statistics that measure the central location or value of sets of scores (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997, p. 620). They are used widely to summarize and simplify large quantities of data. The mean, median, and mode are all measures of central tendency.

Measures of variability are used to show the differences among the scores in a distribution (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997, p. 623). The statistics provide an indication of how different, or dispersed, the scores are from one another. Three measures of variability are range, variance, and standard deviation.

Summary

The review of literature provided an overview of freshmen programs that increase interaction, retention, and the satisfaction of first-year students and methods of evaluating such programs. The literature included information that provided a conceptual base for this evaluation project, and identified previous research findings. There was literature that cited the advantages of evaluating freshmen programs and the successful changes that can result. There is also a body of literature (as cited and located in Appendix D) that discusses guidelines for evaluating freshmen seminars or first-year programs and describes how these valuable questions can be used for self-study. The literature also revealed methods of analyzing a Likert scale rating system.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

This chapter details the methodology and procedures that were followed to perform the evaluation of the Weekend Programming Calendar for incoming freshmen at Clarion University of Pennsylvania. The chapter concludes with an identification of the assumptions and limitations of the study.

Methodology

An evaluation study is a "carefully implemented set of procedures used to assess the value, merit, growth, or worth of a program, practice, activity, product, process, etc. when compared with pre-established criteria" (Varcoe, 1994, p. 6). This study used the evaluation methodology to assess the value, merit, and worth of the Weekend Programming Calendar for incoming freshmen at Clarion University of Pennsylvania. The following section details the seven procedures that were followed to establish criteria, design assessment procedures, collect, analyze, and present data, and finally, to reach conclusions and make specific recommendations for action, dissemination, and further research.

Procedures

First, a review of literature related to the evaluation of freshmen programs that increase interaction, retention, and the satisfaction of first-year students was conducted in order to establish a conceptual base for the evaluation project, to explore the theoretical and conceptual thinking of experts in the field, to identify previous research findings, and to provide a basis for discussion in Chapter 5. Primary sources included several journal articles and ERIC documents discussing student interaction, social interaction, retention, evaluation procedures, and similar freshmen programs at numerous institutions. These resources provided information regarding

similar freshmen seminars and programs and techniques used to evaluate those respective programs. The review of pertinent literature is organized into three subtopics: (a) similar freshmen programs; (b) institutional evaluation of freshmen programs; and (c) analysis of a Likert scale.

Second, the outcomes of the original Weekend Programming Calendar were identified (see Appendix A, p. 42). These were supplied by the Committee Chair of the Special Weekend Programming Committee, a sub-committee on retention at Clarion University. The outcomes were the original goals and objectives for the Weekend Programming Calendar of events for incoming freshmen.

Third, a formative committee was established. The questionnaire was developed and validated in a previous practicum study. The formative committee assisted in the development of criteria to evaluate the Weekend Programming Calendar. The criteria were based upon the literature review and input from individuals involved in student activities, research, and freshmen programs and who were knowledgeable about conducting institutional research as well as survey implementation. This formative committee consisted of the Director of Student Activities at Clarion University, the Assistant Dean of Admissions and Retention Coordinator at Clarion University, and the Director of the Gemmell Student Center. They were chosen to serve on the committee because of their extensive work with students, particularly first-year students. The complete listing of all participants serving on the formative committee and why and how they were chosen is include in Appendix B (p. 44).

Fourth, a summative committee was established. The criteria, instrument, and measurement scores set by the formative committee were submitted to the summative committee

for their review, discussion, and validation. The summative committee members were familiar with the content area as well as the product area, and included a representative of the area assisting in the implementation of the questionnaire. This committee of experts consisted of a Professor of Communication, the Dean of Enrollment Management at Clarion University, and a Director in Residence Life at Clarion University of Pennsylvania. The complete listing of the participants serving on the summative committee along with their qualifications is included in Appendix C (p. 45).

Fifth, the questionnaire was administered the first week after Thanksgiving holiday, two weeks prior to the end of the fall 1998 semester. Two hundred students were randomly selected throughout the seven residence halls on campus. A Resident Director along with Resident Assistants distributed the questionnaire to respondents in small group settings during the Sunday evening, mandatory floor meetings. Respondents were informed of the events that took place throughout the semester, asked to carefully rate the events, and clearly answer the open-ended questions. The time to complete the survey in each residence hall was approximately twenty minutes.

Sixth, the survey questionnaires were collected and the data was tabulated. The results are presented in Chapter 4 of this report along with appropriate tables. The data from the questionnaire was analyzed by calculating mean scores, and recommendations were made to the formative committee based on the results. The recommendations are included in Chapter 5 of this report.

Seventh, the survey questionnaire results and a copy of this practicum report were presented to the summative committee for validation against the previously established outcomes and measurement scores to determine that all criteria have been met. A copy of the results and a

list of the recommendations were submitted to the Director of Student Activities and to the Assistant Dean of Admissions and Retention Coordinator at Clarion University.

Assumptions

For this practicum, it was assumed that members of the formative committee would have the knowledge to guide the development of an evaluation of the Weekend Programming Calendar. It was assumed the experts were able to establish validity in reviewing goals and objectives of the evaluation of the Weekend Programming Calendar. It was also assumed students would give honest responses and the survey population would represent the broad range of freshmen equivalent to the freshmen class at Clarion University.

Limitations

The product was limited to freshmen at Clarion University. Since the social events on weekends were targeted to freshmen at Clarion University, the evaluation of the Weekend Programming Calendar was specific to these students. The results of this study may not be generalized because data and information obtained for the study pertains to a specific evaluation of a unique calendar at a specific institution.

Chapter 4

Results

Results of the Review of Literature

The review of literature provided a conceptual base for the evaluation study and provided pertinent information regarding freshmen programs that increase interaction, retention, and the satisfaction of first-year students. Previous research findings were explored, and fundamental components of evaluation studies of freshmen seminars and programs were identified. The literature review also provided insight into how a carefully constructed evaluation can lead to successful changes in freshmen programming and how effective evaluations are performed at other institutions. One key finding in the literature review suggested possible guidelines for evaluating the freshmen year experience (see Appendix D). These guidelines were significant because many of the events in the Weekend Programming Calendar positively conformed to the questions provided in the booklet published by the Center for the Study of the Freshmen Year Experience at South Carolina University. The literature review provided a basis for the discussion, conclusions, implications, and recommendations in Chapter 5.

Results of Identification of Outcomes

Outcomes were supplied by the Committee Chair of the Special Weekend Programming Committee, a sub-committee on retention at Clarion University (see Appendix A, p. 43). This person was a major contributor in the development of the Weekend Programming Calendar for incoming freshmen at Clarion University of Pennsylvania during the fall 1998 semester, which was the focus of this evaluation study. The outcomes were the original goals and objectives for the Weekend Programming Calendar of events for incoming freshmen, therefore the outcomes represented the expected results. The fact that the Committee Chair will be the individual

implementing the recommendations establishes evidence that the study will be valuable and helpful in decision-making processes regarding the future efforts of the Special Weekend Programming Committee at Clarion University of Pennsylvania.

Results of the Formative Committee

The formative committee assisted in the development of criteria to evaluate the Weekend Programming Calendar. The committee consisted of the Director of Student Activities at Clarion University, the Assistant Dean of Admissions and Retention Coordinator at Clarion University, and the Director of the Gemmell Student Center. A complete listing of all participants serving on the formative committee and why and how they were chosen is in Appendix B (p. 44). Since the program goals and objectives submitted by the Chair of Special Weekend Programming Committee already provided outcomes to base success of the program, the formative committee established criteria to base the measurement scores of individual events. It was agreed upon by the formative committee that any event with a satisfaction level of 4 would be seen as productive and well-liked by the respondents. Events with a satisfaction level less than 4 would be deemed unacceptable by the committee's evaluating standards, and be carefully considered for inclusion in the next event calendar.

The formative committee also adopted the criteria to evaluate the events rated by respondents as ideas for next year's event calendar. Events with a favorable score of 4 by respondents should receive strong consideration for inclusion in the next calendar, while any event favored less than 4 should be carefully considered, and any event favored less than 3 should not be included in the next event calendar. The formative committee defined "careful consideration" as examining costs of the event, resources, scheduling difficulty, and other planning measures.

The formative committee agreed that answers to the open-ended questions be evaluated on the basis of affordability, entertainment value, interest level of students, faculty and peers, cultural inclusion, sponsorship, travel expense, cost to the student, and opportunity for many to attend. One committee member stressed the importance of selecting a few events so the respondents will feel they had made an impact, but to adhere to the goals and objectives of the original outcomes set forth by the Weekend Programming Committee.

The formative committee agreed to administer the survey the Sunday following Thanksgiving break. Since classes resumed on Monday, and there were mandatory floor meetings Sunday night in the all Residence Halls, response rates should be high for the questionnaire. The committee agreed that results would be better if the survey was administered immediately after the events concluded before Thanksgiving break.

Results of the Summative Committee

The summative committee met and reviewed the outcomes and the measurement scores for review, discussion, and validity. The committee discussed how the results would be measured against the original outcomes of the Weekend Programming Calendar. One committee member was not clear how the objective to encourage the level of participation was going to be measured. It was recommended that respondents understand the importance of circling "DNA" on the questionnaire if they did not attend an event, since this is important to the results of the evaluation study. According to one committee member, some events may have a low participation score, however because of lack of space this may be a highly successful event, so it was suggested to analyze the results carefully.

It was also suggested that the measurement scores be judged accurately too. One committee member recommended that even though an event scored over a 4 (which makes

it a satisfying event), attendance figures for it may be low, so the data could be a little misleading. Events that have a high participation count and score over a 4 should be regarded as the most effective events, unless there has been an attendance cap because of a limited number of spaces available for the event.

It was also suggested that some of the cultural events that include minorities might not appeal to the general freshmen population at the university, so these events should be evaluated on the importance to stimulating cultural diversity at the university. According to one committee member, even though an event may not score highly and be poorly attended, it does not mean the event is not an important part of the Weekend Programming Calendar.

One final suggestion was made regarding the implementation of the survey. The research expert on the committee suggested selecting from those floors that in the past have responded highly to surveys of this type, if possible, even considering those respondents who might be known by Resident Assistants as actively participating in weekend events. According to this individual, this might give credible results regarding the satisfaction of individual events.

Results of the Revisions

Although no formal revisions were made in the outcomes or measurement scores, input from the summative committee helped to define the importance of carefully reviewing the results of the survey. The committee helped verify that the results are intended to elicit feedback from participants. Whether to continue the program, revise the program, or eliminate the program needs to assessed carefully by the Special Weekend Programming Committee, but the evaluation study will aid greatly in that decision-making process.

Results of the Collection and Tabulation of Data

Two hundred surveys were distributed to students in seven different residence halls on the campus of Clarion University, Sunday, November 29. The survey was administered under the supervision of Resident Assistants during the mandatory floor meeting in groups of twenty students per floor. As expected, the response rate was very high because the Resident Assistants collected the surveys immediately after respondents had completed them during the meeting. Of the surveys distributed, 188 out of 200 were returned, representing a response rate of 94 percent. The male residence hall returned just 8 of 20 surveys, which was due to the fact that Monday was the opening day of deer season. Results are presented under the following subheadings: (a) satisfaction with events; (b) advertising of Weekend Programming Events; (c) advertising of all events; (d) satisfaction with fall 1999 events; and (e) respondent suggestions for new activities.

Satisfaction with Events

During the fall 1998 semester, the Weekend Programming Calendar for freshmen at Clarion University of Pennsylvania consisted of 27 scheduled events beginning the first weekend of the semester and ending just before Thanksgiving break. The final event listed on the calendar, the trip to the Football Hall of Fame, was canceled since there was not enough interest to fill the coach bus. Table 1 indicates the weight total, mean score, the standard deviation, and the number of students out of 200 who responded that they attended the event (events scoring over a 4.0 out of 5).

Table 1

Events Scoring Higher than 4.0

Event	Weight Total	Mean Score	Standard Dev.	No. Attended
Cook Forest Trip	170	4.5	.59	38
Movie "Scream"	240	4.3	.22	56
Battle of Bands	273	4.7	.66	58
Whitewater Raft	168	4.3	.71	39
UAB Movie Nite	180	4.3	.90	43
Res Hall Softball	275	4.6	.40	60
Cosmic Bowling	200	4.2	.87	48
Res Hall Volley	280	4.3	.80	65
Cultural Night	238	4.4	.58	54
Fr. Talent Show	232	4.1	.76	57

Note. A score of 5 indicated the highest level of satisfaction with the event.

There were six events that scored below 3.0 , which was considered the midpoint on the level of satisfaction scale. Those events were: (a) Clarion coffeehouse; (b) All-City Jazz show; (c) UAB Steeler party; (d) Academic bowl; (e) Halloween seance; and (f) movie in Gemmell. The highest attended event was the Family Day picnic (116 responded they attended).

Advertising Weekend Programming Calendar Events

Table 2 displays how respondents indicated they were informed about the events featured in the Weekend Programming Calendar. The percentage refers to the degree to which respondents received information about the calendar through those respective outlets. Eight-three percent of the students reported they received information by campus posters, 81% through friends.

Table 2

Advertising of Weekend Programming Events

Category	Frequency (n = 188)	Percent
Campus posters	157	83
Friends	153	81
Resident Assistants	130	69
Student activity calendar	96	51
Clarion Call newspaper	72	38
WCUC-FM college radio	63	36
Clarion web page	15	08
CUB-TV 5 campus TV station	8	04
Other (Crawling digital sign board)	5	03

Note. Respondents could choose as many that applied, therefore numbers exceed n value of 188.

Advertising of All Campus Events

There were no significant differences in the way respondents said they were informed of other campus events. Students did respond, however, that they were informed more about campus events by "friends" (88 %), than by "campus posters" (85 %). Resident Assistants informed students 78 % of the time.

Satisfaction of Fall 1999 Event Ideas

Table 3 indicates how highly in favor respondents were to seven possible additions to the Fall 1999 Weekend Programming Calendar. The results are listed in order of highest scores, on a scale of 1 to 5, with a score of 5 indicating "highly in favor." Table 3 shows the possible event and the mean score.

Table 3

Event Ideas for Fall 1999

Event for Fall 1999	Mean Score
Day trip to the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame	4.8
Concert at Starlake Amphitheater	4.8
Afternoon trip to Grove City Outlets	4.7
Day trip to Presque Park	4.6
An overnight to see a play in Toronto	4.5
Concert at Penn State University	4.1
Rollerskating party	2.4

Respondent Suggestions for New Activities

Respondents were asked what suggestions they had for improving or adding events to the Fall 1999 Weekend Programming Calendar. This was an open-ended question. Respondents did not have a set of answers from which to choose. Survey responses were then grouped into similar categories and are presented in Table 4. The most frequent answer was to plan a ski trip weekend to one of the nearby ski resorts. Other popular ideas included trips to Niagara Falls, Canada/Toronto trip, New York City/Broadway play, Pittsburgh Pirate games, and Kennywood Park trips.

Table 4

Respondent Suggestions for New Activities

Respondent Event Ideas	Frequency
Ski trip	5
Niagara Falls	4
Canada/Toronto trip	3
New York City/Broadway play	3
Pittsburgh Pirates games	3
Kennywood Park	2
3 on 3 basketball	1
Outdoor B-B-Q and band	1
Pool parties	1

table continues

Cook Forest camping weekend	1
Penn State football game	1

Results of Analysis of Data

The data from the survey questionnaire was analyzed by using mean scores, standard deviation, and frequency to produce findings, conclusions, and implications. The results were compared to those of the previous established criteria. Recommendations were then prepared based on the results of the survey questionnaire and literature review. A complete list of the recommendations is included in Chapter 5 of this report.

Results of Submitting Recommendations

A copy of the results and a list of the recommendations were submitted to the Director of Student Activities and to the Assistant Dean of Admissions and Retention Coordinator at Clarion University. The Director of Student Activities has indicated the results will provide excellent feedback regarding the satisfaction of events offered to freshmen. The Assistant Dean of Admissions and Retention Coordinator has also indicated the survey results will be the basis for revising the Fall 1999 Weekend Programming Calendar during the spring of 1999.

Chapter 5

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Discussion

Willey (1993) states that the freshmen seminar course at Frostburg State University includes course topics such as knowledge about campus activities, dealing with freedom, self-appraisal of abilities, selecting a major, cultural diversity, and developing commitments (p 49). The Weekend Programming Calendar at Clarion University of Pennsylvania is similar to the freshman seminar offered at Frostburg State University. Some of the highest rated events in the survey involved cultural diversity (Cultural Night, 4.4), developing commitments (Softball and Volleyball, 4.6 and 4.3 respectively), and self-appraisal of abilities (Freshman Talent Show, 4.1). After an evaluation of the Frostburg freshmen seminar identified the positive relationship between greater commitment to the institution and high social and academic interaction, the university committed to keeping the program strong.

The freshmen seminar offered at UNC-Charlotte is designed to integrate students with the academic and social environment at the university (Maistro, 1993, p. 73). The Weekend Programming Calendar has events scheduled that are much like the freshmen seminar at UNC-Charlotte. In the UNC-Charlotte evaluation, it was found that freshmen seminar participants had significantly higher grade point averages and more informal social interactions with faculty than non-participants. This is a significant finding. Results of the evaluation of the Weekend Programming Calendar show some of the highest rated events in regard to student satisfaction foster interaction with faculty and other peers throughout the university. The Cook Forest/Canoe trip, rated 4.5, included faculty members and administrators from the university. The Whitewater rafting trip, rated 4.3, had a number of Resident Assistants, Resident Directors, and

members of the Admissions Department take part in the event. The Battle of the Bands, rated very high at 4.7, had a faculty member's band entered in the contest. Not only were these events successful in terms of satisfaction ratings, but they also encouraged the interaction between faculty, staff, peers, and freshmen in an informal setting. If these events had the same impact as the study at UNC-Charlotte, then there may be a positive relationship between these weekend events and grade point average at Clarion University as well.

An evaluation of a freshmen seminar at Ramapo College of New Jersey was critical in making a decision regarding a change that affected the first-year seminar. In 1986, the three-semester hour seminar was offered to freshmen for a letter grade. The seminar included units on higher education in America, writing, research, computer skills, interpersonal skills and diversity-interaction. After an evaluation of the program, it was determined that freshmen-to sophomore retention rates favored those students who enrolled in the seminar (Starke, 1993, p. 39). The evaluation study proved useful in making the freshmen seminar a required course for all first-year students. Much like the Ramapo College evaluation, decisions guiding the direction of the Weekend Programming Calendar will be based on some of the results of this evaluation study.

Event ideas for 1999 were rated by respondents in the survey questionnaire. Results showed that the day trips to the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, Presque Park, and an overnight trip to Toronto were all rated above a 4.5 mean score. Respondents suggested more trips that would take students away from Clarion University, to such places as Toronto, New York City, Pittsburgh, and a ski trip in New York state. These suggestions indicate students are willing to experience diversity-interaction, and improve interpersonal skills while traveling away from Clarion University. In the Ramapo study, diversity-interaction and interpersonal skills, which

are taught as a part of the freshmen seminar, improved retention rates. These types of results from this evaluation study are important since this will be shared with the Retention Coordinator of Clarion University.

Gardner (1993) presents questions that can be used by a college or university task force looking at the freshmen year experience and can be utilized to aid the process of campus self-study or assessment (p. 3). Some of the questions provided in the booklet can be directly related to quickly evaluating the Weekend Programming Calendar. The question, "To what extent and through what mechanisms are freshmen, both resident and commuter, encouraged to get involved in co-curricular activities, such as student government, campus publications, Greek life, campus clubs, leadership training, etc.?" can be answered in regard to the calendar of events. Many of the events that appear on the calendar are sponsored by organizations on campus, adding visibility to freshmen as they are attending these events. One of the highest rated events, the UAB Movie Night, with a 4.3 rating, is sponsored by the University Activities Board. The entire calendar encourages participation in all campus organizations, clubs, and activities.

"Do campus rituals, ceremonies, special functions or receptions celebrate the arrival of freshmen?," is another question from the Gardner booklet. This self-study question is answered by an event on the Weekend Programming Calendar known as the Freshmen Convocation. Although the Freshmen Convocation only received a rating of 3.3 in level of satisfaction, it was still a highly attended event by respondents. Out of the 188 respondents, 90 responded that they did attend this event which honored the arrival of the "Class of 2002."

One final question of institutional self-study is, "Are faculty who are advocates for freshmen encouraged into the program?" The organizers of the Weekend Programming Calendar have attempted to encourage university advocates of freshmen to participate in various events on

weekends. The most attended event was the Family Day Picnic, with 116 of the 188 respondents saying they attended the picnic and football game with their parents. Many of the university leaders attend this picnic, including faculty, administrators, peers, and the President of Clarion University. As the literature has revealed in studies from other institutions with similar programs, interaction between students, parents, and university personnel can help grade point average, retention, commitment to the institution, and make freshmen more comfortable in the social setting of the campus.

There was one research question developed with regard to this practicum. The research question was, "To what extent is the Weekend Programming Calendar meeting the program objectives?" This study reported that to some extent the program objectives are being met. There were six events that scored below 3.0. The criteria mean score was 4.0 set forth by the formative and summative committees. Considering a midpoint of 3, a score that indicates students were not satisfied or dissatisfied with an event, and the fact that 10 events had a mean score of 4 or higher, it seems reasonable that students were most satisfied. The goals also seemed to be met when considering that the Family Day Picnic was attended by more than half of those responding, 116 out of 188. Nearly half of the respondents attended the Freshmen Convocation, 90 out of 188. The UAB sponsored Movie Nights had a very good turnout considering the size of the theaters offering the student discount, 51 out of 188. The Residence Hall Softball and Volleyball tournaments had enough teams to make each tournament a two-day event, 60 out of 188, and 65 out of 188.

Conclusions

This study revealed the level of satisfaction among freshmen in the programs that were offered to them on weekends as a part of the Weekend Programming Calendar. Twenty-six

events were offered to students throughout the fall 1998 semester. The calendar had a variety of cultural, musical, athletic, recreational, entertainment, social, and academic events which encouraged interaction among faculty, parents, peers, and students. The study indicated that most were well attended, and that most students who responded to the survey were satisfied with many of the events. The highest attended were the Family Day Picnic and the Freshmen Convocation. The five highest rated on the level of satisfaction scale were Battle of the Bands, Residence Hall Softball, UAB Movie Night, Cook Forest/Canoe Trip, and the Residence Hall Volleyball.

The results indicate that students would like more trips to places away from Clarion University. Students were in favor of the events that took them away from Clarion such as the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, Starlake Amphitheater, Grove City Outlets, Presque Park on Lake Erie, and Toronto, Canada. The respondents suggested new ideas such as going to Niagara Falls, New York City, ski trips, and Pirate games. Campus posters, friends, and Resident Assistants were the three most frequent ways respondents received information about Weekend Programming Calendar events and other campus events. This information supports the strong network among peers, faculty, and friends that is necessary for a programs such as this to be successful.

Implications

The purpose of the study was to determine the extent to which the Weekend Programming Calendar for first-year students was meeting the established program goals. The study identified which of the twenty-six events offered to students were the rated the highest in level of satisfaction. It also identified how students were informed about events in the Weekend Programming Calendar and compared those results to how students are normally informed about

all campus events. Respondents rated event ideas for the Fall 1999 Weekend Programming Calendar and offered suggestions for events they would like to see added to the next calendar.

The results showed that respondents rated highly events that involved sports and recreation, faculty members, and leaving the Clarion University community. The literature revealed that students who interact with faculty, challenge their own abilities, and are more involved socially on campus have a greater grade point average, and greater retention rates. Since the Special Weekend Programming Committee is a sub-committee on Retention, these results can have a significant implication regarding freshmen retention at Clarion University of Pennsylvania.

The results also showed that students attend the cultural nights, with a 4.4 rating, especially since they spotlight the International students on campus. The literature revealed the importance of students understanding and feeling comfortable sharing their native cultural backgrounds. Since Clarion University is a small, liberal arts college, located in a rural setting that encourages the interaction of diverse students within the social setting of the university, the results of the survey should be of particular interest to the Calendar organizers. Cultural events on the calendar could increase the interaction of the diverse freshmen population.

Recommendations

An evaluation of the Weekend Programming Calendar for freshmen at Clarion University of Pennsylvania was conducted based on data collected through the literature review and input from the formative and summative committees. Recommendations were made regarding modifications to the Fall 1999 Weekend Programming Calendar based on data collected through the survey and the literature review. These included recommendations for action, dissemination, and further research.

Recommendations for Action

It was recommended that the organizers of the calendar schedule more events that allow students the opportunity to travel from Clarion University to experience interaction in a different setting. This will give freshmen students the opportunity to bond, share new experiences, and develop stronger interpersonal skills. Some groups have sponsored mini-retreats and weekly meetings for similar reasons. Students rated highly the Whitewater rafting trip and the Cook Forest outing, which were both off-campus activities.

It was recommended that more events that include faculty participation or faculty sponsorship be added to the calendar. These events were rated highly by respondents when they included faculty interacting in an informal academic or social setting with first-year students. Faculty who are considered advocates for freshmen should be sought out, and encouraged to participate.

It was recommended that events which had low participation and low satisfaction be dropped from the event calendar and events that were highly successful be sponsored more than one time on the calendar. Events that have a low-cost to the sponsor and are favorable should be offered more times throughout the calendar. For example, the UAB Movie Night was highly rated, highly attended, and could be made available once every two weeks or as often as the movies change at the local theaters.

One final recommendation was that a system should be adopted in which Resident Assistants can make freshmen aware each week of the events on the Weekend Programming Calendar. This information could be shared during mandatory floor meetings on Sunday nights or mid-week. This is a valuable link in spreading the word regarding weekend events on campus aimed at freshmen.

Recommendations for Dissemination

It was recommended that the information gained through this evaluation practicum be shared with the Special Weekend Programming Committee during the planning meetings in the spring 1999 semester. It was recommended that a copy of this report be distributed to the Committee Chairperson, to the Director of Student Activities, to each organization that will be responsible for sponsoring events in the fall, and to the Administration who will fund the Weekend Programming Calendar.

Recommendations for Further Research

It was recommended that further research be conducted by the Weekend Programming Committee to include how the family plays a role in the identity freshmen form with their institution. Often families become networked through their children who are enrolled at the same college. This bond between parents may affect the commitment a child has at a particular institution. Events engaging the connection of parents could be worth researching.

It was also recommended that further research be conducted by the committee to determine the cost of some of the events that were suggested by the respondents. Committee members should look into package deals for college students regarding plays in New York City and Toronto. Research should be done to determine the cost of one-day bus trips to the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, Kennywood Park, and Presque Park in Erie since these were valid suggestions made by survey respondents.

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APPENDIXES

Appendix A

Outcomes of the Original Weekend Programming Calendar

The two goals and objectives of the Weekend Programming Calendar

1. To encourage freshmen to participate in weekend activities on campus.

    A. Events which include faculty, peers, other students, and parents.

    B. Events which celebrate the cultural diversity on campus.

    C. Events which are social and academic in nature.

    D. Events which appeal to a wide range of interests, including the arts, music, history, sports, entertainment, and outdoor recreation.

2. To increase the level of satisfaction freshmen have in the weekend activities within the social setting of the institution.

Appendix B

Formative Committee Members

Director of Student Activities

The Director of Student Activities is an Associate Professor and Administrator at Clarion University of Pennsylvania. This individual is qualified to serve on the formative committee because of an extensive background in Student Activities and university teaching. It was this individual's suggestion that a questionnaire to evaluate the weekend program be conducted to aid in developing the next calendar. This individual has worked for over 25 years in a university setting, reaching out to students in different capacities. Responsibilities include planning the entire University Calendar and disseminating the activity calendar to students, staff, and other university personnel. This individual holds a B.S. and M.A. from Bowling Green University.

Assistant Dean of Admissions/Retention Coordinator

The Assistant Dean of Admissions/Retention Coordinator is an Administrator at Clarion University of Pennsylvania. This individual was qualified to serve on the formative committee because of nearly 20 years in Admissions and serving to recruit first-year students. This individual has served on numerous committees and now is leading a committee in areas of retention. This individual has worked with many high school students and has interacted with them closely to determine the types of events and activities they desire. This individual holds a B.S. and M.S. from Clarion University of Pennsylvania.

Director of the Gemmell Student Center

The Director of the Gemmell Student Center is a full-time employee at Clarion University of Pennsylvania. This individual was qualified to serve on the formative committee because of an extensive background in Student Services and experience conducting surveys and

distributing questionnaires to students on campus. His responsibilities include the daily operation of the Student Center, working with student employees, and scheduling all events that are held in the Student Center. This individual holds a B.S. and M.S. from Indiana University of Pennsylvania.

Appendix C

Summative Committee Members

Associate Professor of Communication

This Associate Professor is a full-time, tenured faculty member in the Department of Communication at Clarion University of Pennsylvania. This individual is qualified to serve on the summative committee because of expertise in the area of communication research and statistics. The professor has co-authored books in higher education, and has published articles in the field of communication research. Responsibilities include teaching Research Methods and Evaluation at the graduate level, Communication Law, Web Design, and various other courses including Research and Evaluation at the undergraduate level. This person holds a B.A. from Purdue University, M.A. from Northern Illinois University, and a Ph.D. from Pennsylvania State University.

Dean of Enrollment Management and Academic Records

The Dean of Enrollment Management and Academic Records is an Administrator at Clarion University of Pennsylvania. This individual is qualified to serve on the summative committee because of extensive knowledge in the area of managing enrollment, and admissions. An evaluation of the Weekend Programming Calendar is of his concern since this person works in an area that closely watches retention levels, academic progress of students, and student satisfaction. This individual holds a B.S. from Clarion University of Pennsylvania.

Residence Life Director

This Resident Director in Residence Life is a full-time employee at Clarion University of Pennsylvania. This individual is qualified to serve on the summative committee because of extensive experience working with first-year students through Residence Life. One

responsibility is working with Resident Assistants in the Residence Halls to make the quality of life for students more enriching, interactive, and communal. The weekend activities are directly disseminated through this position to the Resident Assistants and to the residents. This individual was a valuable part of the administering the questionnaire survey. This individual holds a B.A. from Findlay College and M.S. from Bowling Green State University.

Appendix D

Abridged Guidelines for Freshmen Programming Assessment

The following guidelines were extracted from a booklet prepared by John Gardner and staff members of the National Center for the Study of the Freshmen Year Experience at South Carolina University. The following blueprint questions can be used by a college or a university task force looking at the freshmen year experience. It can also be used to aid the process of campus self-study or assessment. South Carolina University is a benchmark institution in regard to studying the freshmen year experience.

I. Subheading: Student Activities and Campus Services

A. To what extent and through what mechanisms are freshmen, both resident and commuter, encouraged to get involved in co-curricular activities, such as student government, campus publications, Greek life, campus clubs, leadership training, etc.?

B. Are freshmen intentionally made aware of campus resources such as campus counseling, personal counseling, student health services, fitness programs, and facilities, etc.?

C. What does the institution know about the quality of residence life for freshmen?

D. What kind of programming is done exclusively for freshmen? How are freshmen residential students successfully integrated with upper-class students?

II. Subheading: Development of Common Culture and Community

A. Do campus rituals, ceremonies, special functions or receptions celebrate the arrival of freshmen?

B. Are there common activities throughout the freshmen year that build a strong sense of campus community and impact campus values?

III. Subheading: Institutional Policies and Goals

A. Is top administrative leadership of the institution involved with freshmen?

B. Are faculty who are advocates for freshmen encouraged into the program?